

Overview

Vermont Technical Skills Training Project (H-1B: Round 3)

In November 2000, Vermont received almost \$2.7 million from the U.S. Department of Labor to implement an advanced technical skills training project. DET, on behalf of the Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC), wrote the successful proposal and oversees this two-year grant by providing fiscal and grant management. The project is called the Vermont Technical Skills Training Project and is funded through the fees employers pay to bring skilled foreign workers into the U.S. through the H-1B visa program. The goal of this project is to decrease the need to import these skilled foreign workers by providing Vermont workers with advanced technical skills training in high-tech and health care occupations.

The health care component involves high skill training to Registered Nurses, and is being coordinated by the Vermont Association of Hospital and Health Systems Network Organization; the high-tech component involves an engineering technology program and is being offered by Vermont Technical College. Training in the health care component will be provided for approximately 148 specialty nurses in Critical Care and Operating Room nursing. Training in the high-tech component will be provided to approximately 65 incumbent, unemployed, and dislocated workers in various areas of engineering technology. All 16 of Vermont's hospitals are expected to participate in the health care component.

The Critical Care and Operating Room Nurse training have finished their first sessions (out of five planned for each area.) The classroom component is being offered via distance learning and live classroom instruction at Fletcher Allen Hospital. Seventeen nurses were in the first session of Critical Care Nursing and nine were in Operating Room Nurse training. Preceptors were identified and trained as were nurse educators from the participating hospitals. The second session of Critical Care began July 16, 2001 and 18 nurses are enrolled. The second session of Operating Room nursing began August 16, 2001 with about 10 nurses.

The Vermont Nurse Internship Program at Mt. Ascutney Hospital coordinated the design of the preceptor and nurse educator training. These are two days and one day long, respectively, and the sessions will be repeated several times over the life of the grant. Already over a 100 preceptors have been trained along with many nurse educators.

The University of Vermont's School of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences is awarding six undergraduate college credits for the Critical Care training; the grant pays for this tuition. In addition, the Critical Care Nurse training classroom curriculum is being web-enhanced. An analysis is being made to ascertain if the Critical Care classroom portion can be totally web-based for a reasonable amount of money. If it can then it would allow the American Hospital Association, as part of their training consortium, to provide the Critical Care training to nurses from all over the country. It is anticipated that future, post-grant potential revenues generated from this web-based curriculum would allow it to be sustained. It is also anticipated that nurses in Vermont's hospitals would have future access, as well, to this web-based curriculum for little or no cost.

The high technology portion of the H-1B grant is being offered by Vermont Technical College. It will have up to five staggered two-year sessions. The first began in January, is offered on VTC's campus and resembles a traditional, full-time two-year college experience. The second session began on April 30, 2001 and is being offered at Blair Park in Williston and will follow a continuing education model (i.e., courses offered during the week that allow for incumbent workers to both work and take the classes.) Some labs will be offered on VTC's campus. Twenty-three people were enrolled in the second session of which 18 are incumbent workers and five are unemployed and/or dislocated workers.

VTC has requested approval to award a more specialized two-year Electrical or Mechanical Engineering degree instead of a General Engineering & Technology degree. This would require seven more credit hours and cost more per participant. Discussions are underway with U.S. DOL to seek federal approval.

A committee is continuing to design a Psychiatric Nurse training program. This training, like critical care and operating room nurse training, would provide RN's with specialty training. It is anticipated that a small pilot program would be offered at Brattleboro Retreat in Spring 2002. Classroom instruction would be augmented by clinical experiences at various hospitals.

Several organizations are working with DET to plan Vermont's next H-1B grant submission.